

# Soul-Switching and the Immateriality of Human Nature: On an Argument Reported by Razi

The progress of philosophy, at least, is dialectical: we return to old insights in new and, we hope,  
improved forms. [P. F. Strawson]<sup>1</sup>

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## 1- INTRODUCTION

Our epistemic position with respect to other persons has almost surely not been used to reject the immateriality of human nature until around the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Gilbert Ryle was one of the first recent philosophers to turn the difficulty

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<sup>1</sup> P.F. Strawson, *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays* (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> I have searched in vain for such cases before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, though it's hard to prove negative existentials in the history of philosophy. I should add, however, that this is not the case for the “problem of other minds” per se (i.e. not as a challenge to substance dualism or to the immateriality of the soul). It has historical roots in ancient philosophy (e.g. the Cyrenaics and the neo-Pyrrhonist Theodosius) and there are various discussions about the issue in the modern era of philosophy (e.g. Thomas Reid and John Stuart Mill). See Voula Tsouna, “Remarks about Other Minds in Greek

of accounting for our knowledge of other people's minds (that is normally called the problem of other minds) into an explicit argument against their immateriality. In his book *The Concept of Mind* Ryle asserts that an adherent of the official theory (i.e., Cartesian substance dualism) "has no good reason to believe that there do exist minds other than his own."<sup>3</sup> Since then the problem of other minds has been systematically exploited as one of the standard challenges to mind-body (brain) substance dualism. William Jaworski, for example, has formulated the challenge in the following way:

1 If substance dualism is true, then we cannot know what mental states other people have or that other people exist.

2 We can know what mental states other people have and that other people exist.

Therefore, substance dualism is false.<sup>4</sup>

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Philosophy," *Phronesis*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Aug., 1998), pp. 245-263; and Anita Avramides, *Other Minds* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> William Jaworski, *Philosophy of Mind: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 50. See also Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), P. 26; Georges Rey, *Contemporary Philosophy of Mind: A Contentiously Classical Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 74; and Dean Zimmerman, "Dualism in the Philosophy of Mind," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) volume 3, ed. in chief Donald M. Borchert (Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2006), pp. 113-122, at p.118.